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ABSTRACT

Part of a resource package designed to assist local education agency personnel in improving the quality of instruction and supportive services to students with special needs enrolled in vocational education programs, the first of nine instructor guides presents an overview of the three-phase special needs identification and assessment system. A graphic portrayal of the system and a description of each of the system's major phases and component parts are provided. A description of how the information in Guides 2 through 9 fit together to provide a workable structure for the continuous assessment of student needs and progress in vocational education is offered. (SBH)

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INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

INTRODUCTION TO THE IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Special Needs Identification and Assessment Project
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PREFACE

This resource package contains a series of nine guides related to the identification and assessment of students with special needs[1] enrolled in vocational education programs. Its central goals are: 1) to assist local education agency personnel in the development of functional procedures for determining the needs of special learners, and 2) to provide local education agency personnel with a systematic process for coordinating and evaluating the instructional programs and supportive services delivered to students with special needs.

The nine guides are to serve as practical aids for vocational, special and remedial education instructors, coordinators and counselors who are, or who will be, involved in preparing, implementing and evaluating individualized vocational-educational programs for students with special needs. This guide, Guide 1, presents a three-phase assessment system and briefly describes how the information offered in Guides 2 through 9 fits together to provide a workable structure for the continuous assessment of student needs and progress in vocational education.

The guides can be used on an individual basis, or by instructional and support service personnel in cooperative planning sessions. The latter approach was emphasized during the field testing of these materials and should increase both the efficiency and the effectiveness of planning for students with special needs.

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[1] The phrase "students with special needs" refers to individuals who are being considered for, or who are enrolled in secondary or post-secondary vocational education programs and who, due to the effects of disability, disadvantage or dysfunctional school placement, need additional instruction and supportive services in order to succeed within educational and/or employment settings (Phelps, L. Allen, Someone with Special Needs: An Alternative Definition. Illinois Career Education Journal, 33 (2), 1976).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The development, formative field test evaluation and revision of the products within this resource package are a result of the contributions of many professionals. The preparation of these products would not have been possible without the collective wisdom and experience of individuals from local, state and university sectors. The project and adjunct staff, field test participants and steering committee were essential to the success of the project. They are listed on pages 3 through 6.

Very special credit is due two persons who conceived this project and who provided important ideas, encouragement and assistance throughout the project, L. Allen Phelps and Tim L. Wentling.

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A preliminary version of the project materials was field-tested by a total of 29 special and vocational education instructors, coordinators, counselors and administrators from five school districts. A team of educators from each school district participated in the field testing by utilizing the guides for students with special needs enrolled in their vocational courses during the 1977-78 school year. After completing each guide, the team members evaluated the appropriateness and feasibility of the guide's content and format. The guides were then revised by the project staff, based on the feedback received from field test participants and steering committee members.

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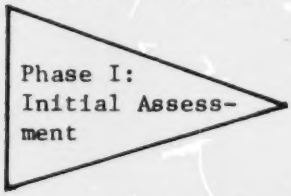
DESCRIPTION OF THE THREE-PHASE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM

Guides 2 through 9 represent the major components of a system for assessing the instructional and supportive service needs of students with special learning, behavioral and/or physical difficulties. This section provides a brief overview of how the components go together to provide a comprehensive design for identifying student needs and for monitoring student progress.

Figure 1 on page 9 graphically illustrates the assessment system and identifies each of the guides. The system is divided into three phases according to the chronological progression of the student through an instructional program. As seen in Figure 1, the three phases include initial, continuous and ultimate assessment activities. Each phase and related activities are described below:



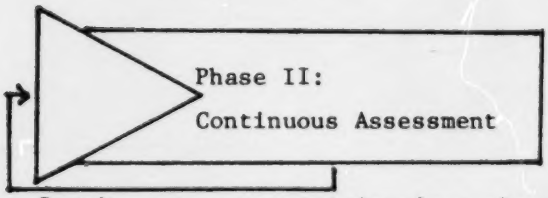
The purpose of initial assessment activities is to assess the specific vocational-educational needs of the special learner. It is at this stage that the learner's present level of performance is determined and an individualized instructional and supportive services plan is developed. Initial assessment activities are to occur prior to, and/or during the first three weeks of the instructional program.

The instructor resource guides related to Phase I activities are:

Guide 2 - Procedures for Identifying Students with Special Needs

Guide 3 - Strategies for Assessing the Student's Present Level(s) of Performance

Guide 4 - Preparing an Individualized Vocational Plan



Continuous assessment involves the systematic monitoring of student progress throughout the school year. By maintaining an on-going record of student performance, the instructor has a clearer picture of individual student progress and is able to describe specific areas of strength and weakness to the student and to those involved in developing the learner's individualized vocational plan. This up-to-date progress information is to be used to identify specific modifications which need to be made in

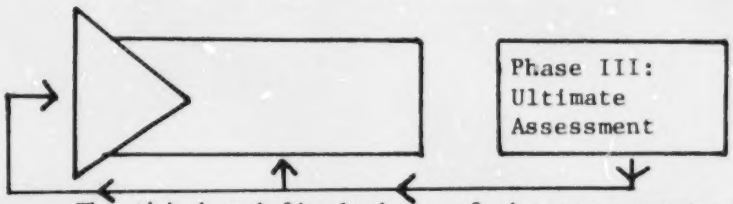
the learner's individualized vocational plan and for evaluating learner achievement near the time of completion of the vocational course or program.

The instructor guides related to continuous assessment activities include:

Guide 5 - The Use of the Training Plan in Concurrent Work-Education Programs

Guide 6 - Assessing Vocational Skill Development

Guide 7 - Monitoring the Student's Individualized Vocational Plan



The third and final phase of the assessment system centers on one of the ultimate goals of the vocational program--preparing the individual for productive employment in society. Hence, a major purpose of ultimate assessment is to determine the learner's performance, following completion of the vocational program, in the world of work and/or in continued education. In addition to providing information on student adjustment, ultimate assessment activities can provide the vocational instructor with a means for identifying the skills currently required for on-the-job success. Both student adjustment and job performance information should be helpful in providing vocational instruction to future special needs learners.

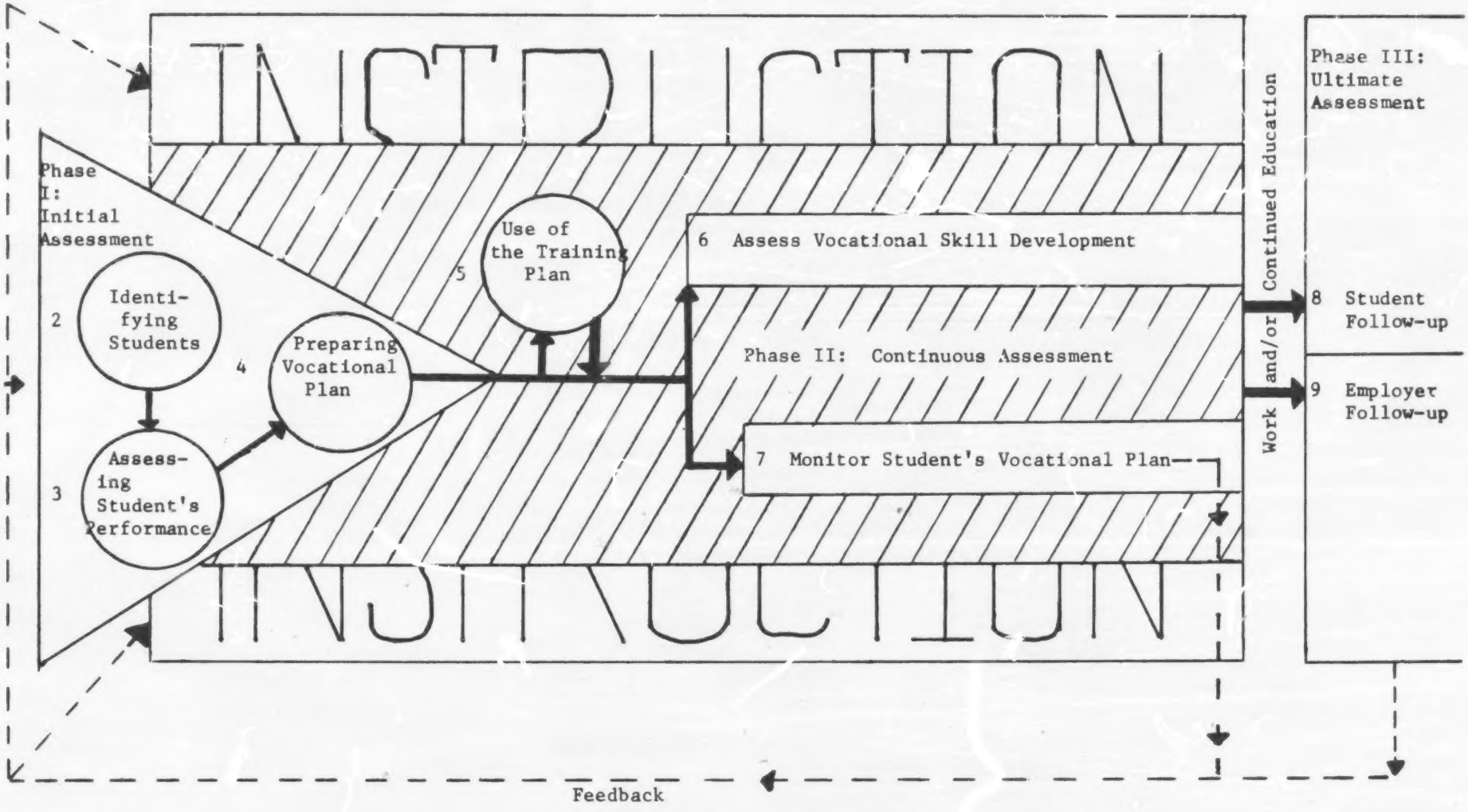
Two instructor guides pertain to ultimate assessment activities:

Guide 8 - Conducting Student Follow-up

Guide 9 - Conducting Employer Follow-up

While the assessment system does offer a number of procedures for monitoring the progress of the special learner, the basic strategies and ideas employed within this system are not new to the field of education. Most instructors are already assessing learner needs and collecting student progress data for instructional decision-making. These instructors should find that the suggestions offered herein reinforce their on-going efforts.

Figure 1 - Special Needs Identification and Assessment System



USE AND DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTRUCTOR GUIDES

Use and Format of Guides

The nine guides are designed for use by vocational, special and remedial education instructors, coordinators and counselors. Although the guides are integrated in a sequential pattern, it is not necessary that all be used, nor that they be employed in their numbered sequence. Each guide has been developed to "stand on its own." The decision as to the use of some or all of the guides will depend on the program and staff needs at each local education agency. It is expected that each reader will find a different way to make use of the information in this resource package.

The format within Guides 2 through 9 is uniform. In addition to a table of contents, each guide has four parts. Each part is briefly described below:

Introduction - This section explains the *purpose* and the *importance* of the activity presented in the guide.

Guidelines and Considerations - This part provides key information and suggestions for planning and/or conducting the activity under consideration.

For Further Investigation - This section contains a listing of additional references on the topic(s) presented within the guide. Most of the references cited came from recent journal publications or contemporary textbooks.

Example Documents - This section provides example or sample forms, instruments and communiques that could be helpful in developing new ones to fit individual needs. These documents were developed, or adapted, and used during the field testing of the instructor guides.

Description of Each Guide

Guide 1: Introduction to the Identification and Assessment System

This guide presents an overview of the three-phase special needs identification and assessment system. A graphic portrayal of the system and a description of each of the system's major phases and component parts are provided. Suggestions on how to use the instructor guides are also contained within Guide 1.

Guide 2: Procedures for Identifying Students with Special Needs

Guide 2 examines the process of identifying and referring the student who is having a difficult time adjusting to the instructional program. Steps for determining the local education agency's procedures for student identification and referral are suggested and guidelines for developing such procedures are presented.

Guide 3: Strategies for Assessing the Student's Present Level(s) of Performance

This guide presents four different strategies which can be used in conducting a comprehensive assessment of the learner's level of vocational-educational performance at the time of entry into the vocational education program. This present level of performance information serves as the foundation for customizing the learner's instructional program. Also included within Guide 3 are suggestions on: 1) the personnel to be involved in collecting learner performance information, 2) the kinds of information to be collected, 3) the timeline for collecting learner performance data, and 4) how this information can be compiled for reporting purposes.

Guide 4: Preparing the Individualized Vocational Plan

Guide 4 introduces procedures for developing an individualized plan of action for the student with special needs. This individualized vocational plan identifies learner performance level(s) and pinpoints areas where additional instruction and special support services are needed. Each of the major components of the individualized plan is discussed, with examples provided to illustrate how the plan is to be prepared. Persons familiar with Individualized Education Program (IEP) development will find the procedures offered in Guide 4 to be compatible.

Guide 5: The Use of the Training Plan in Concurrent Work-Education Programs

This guide is specifically designed for instructors or teacher-coordinators who either have or will have responsibility for coordinating the learner's instruction in the school and at a training station in the community. The purpose of Guide 5 is to illustrate how the training plan can supplement the individualized vocational plan developed for the learner and also to serve as a tool for recording student progress throughout the school year.

Guide 6: Assessing Vocational Skill Development

Guide 6 offers suggestions for assessing the student's level of competence in completing an employment-related task or tasks. Strategies for assessing student performance during the task and/or following the completion of a task are discussed with examples provided.

Guide 7: Monitoring the Student's Individualized Vocational Plan

This guide provides the instructor with a means for collecting and recording student progress on a continuous basis. Through systematic monitoring of learner achievement, the instructor has a procedure for observing changes in student performance and a method for determining if modifications in the learner's individualized vocational plan are necessary. A sample document for recording student progress and suggestions for reporting this information are offered in Guide 7.

Guide 8: Conducting Student Follow-up

Procedures for planning and conducting a follow-up of special needs learners who have completed the vocational program and who are now engaged in work and/or continued training are presented in Guide 8. The information collected from learner follow-up should provide the instructor with a reading on the student's level of adjustment in the world of work and also offer some clues as to areas within the instructional program which may need to be strengthened.

Guide 9: Conducting Employer Follow-up

Guide 9 suggests several procedures for organizing and implementing an employer follow-up. By collecting employer feedback on former student job performance and feedback from the former student, both the vocational instructor and the support services personnel have a strong basis for determining future student and program needs.